

Japan's Pioneering Inner-City Research Conducted by the College of Sociology

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Abstract

This paper introduces the research projects which were the result of initiatives taken by two professors that arose as part of the Sociology Department's 25th anniversary in 1982. The research would focus upon inner-city lives in metropolitan Tokyo, especially the Ikebukuro district. One project aimed to explore and clarify the growth of black markets immediately after the Second World War. Their characteristics would be identified and documented. The other project dealt with the changes in local communities, and would later draw attention to the increase in "newcomers" from foreign lands. Since these investigations were so intensive and extensive, they have left behind a positive sociological trail in Japan. The former has become one the most influential surveys in black markets, and the latter is referred to pioneering fieldwork in Japan's urban ethnicity. The College of Sociology does not undertake research with these exact topics, other projects targeting urban life and changes to metropolitan Tokyo still continue to be surveyed by our researchers.

Introduction

This paper proposes to introduce two research projects which have been organized as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the College of Sociology in Rikkyo University. Back in 1982, the stimulus came from a few scholars who conducted distinctively sociological research projects: One was concerned with studies about the contemporary local community and the other was a historical survey of the black markets which had been manifest in various places immediately after the second world war. These two research projects were separately coordinated by faculty members of what became the College of Sociology, Rikkyo University. But eventually they became linked because of their focus upon the inner city areas of metropolitan Tokyo. These projects continue to this day to have a significant impact upon other fields of sociological research.

Surveys on Black Markets

Let me first introduce the Black Market research. This project was initiated by the late Professor Makoto Matsudaira (who passed away on 30 November 2017). His work is well-known for his study of Japan's local festivals and he developed extensive fieldwork exploring urban life and culture. This particular research into black markets commenced in 1982, as the 25th anniversary project, and his book *Black Market Tokyo Ikebukuro [Yami'ichi Tokyo Ikebukuro]* was published in 1985. Later, in 1995, *Phantom Guidebook on Black Market [Yami'ichi maboroshi no gaidobukku]* also arrived on the shelves of our departmental research library. Although he has many more publications concerned with Japan's festival culture, his pioneering and extensive research in black markets was so influential that his previous work was even re-published in October 2019 as a paperback, *Tokyo's Black Market [Tokyo no Yami'ichi]*. Before the founding of the College of Sociology, there had also been some research into black markets by the staff of the College of Literature. That had been immediately after the Second World War. Those involved were the predecessors of Matsudaira's survey.

In recent years, some other books on the black market have also been published. Many of them are historical sociology monographs, but there are also notable introductions to the black market in popular accounts which reconsider their place in urban life and how they functioned in traditional taverns. The scholarly research has encouraged writers of non-academic books. In fact, some recent publications include an academic book entitled *Prime Place was Born from a Black Market [Sakariba wa yamiichi kara umareta]* (H. Hahsimoto and K. Hatsuda 2013). There are also some guidebooks for historical taverns, such as *Tokyo Black Market Tavern, I drank and stood and listened [Tokyo Yami'ichi Sakaba]* (F. Yokota 2017). This trend in publication is somewhat related to the growth of gourmet guides, as some attempt to excavate the unique character of Tokyo's amusement quarters. This brings us from the Sociology Department's studies of Japan's urban life.

Professor Isomura undertook research which focused upon prominent eating places and other amusement quarters in the inner-city areas of major metropolitan centers. He developed the urban analysis framework known as the third space [dai 3 no kukan] (E. Isomura 1959). He is rightly known as father of Japan's urban sociology, and passes away on 5th April 1997. He mentioned that the first and second spaces are for everyday lives, but the third space is dominated by human beings in a non-usual or non-regular world.

The Emergence of Black Markets

Black Markets were formed at the main railway terminals in Tokyo: Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Ueno, Shimbashi, and others. They are well known, but if we are to include other smaller ones in the list, it can be said that they existed all over Tokyo. They became part of Tokyo's scenery. These markets appeared at the central place where Tokyo had become a burnt-out ruin from the fire-bombing raids. In relation to these raids, the famous mysterious novelist, Mr. Edogawa wrote about air raids in his diary (2006, originally written in 1945):

On the night of April 13, 1945, there was a large air raid covering several districts including Toshima Ward, and as a result the Ikebukuro district was scorched, turned into dust and ashes, and Ikebukuro Station was quite visible from my house [now around Rikkyo University campus]. Even the distant mountains could be seen from my house window. The area became a burnt field so extensively.

Mr. Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965) is one of Japan's leading mystery writers. His name is synonymous with "detective novels," and he published many mysteries and fantasies, and even today his work continues to be re-published. There are also many movies and dramas that have been made from his novels. It is noteworthy that his son, Professor Ryutaro Hirai (who died on 9th December 2015) was an Emeritus Professor at Rikkyo University. He had served as the Rikkyo University President for one year from April 1970. Thus, probably the most closely related person to Rikkyo University and Ikebukuro is Professor Hirai, and his house, the former Edogawa Rampo Residence, is now Taishubunka kenkyu senta [The Edogawa Rampo Memorial Center for Popular Culture Studies], which was established in 2006, for research institution "to become a hub of popular culture studies from home and abroad, with a focus on old book collections and materials about Edogawa Rampo" (Taishubunka kenkyu senta 2020).

Immediately after the end of the war, 500 or 800 barracks were built on the west exit of Ikebukuro which had also experienced burning. It became a huge flea market far beyond the east exit. There were still no main streets extending west from the station, and a lot of stores like match boxes were there (Fujiki 2016). The Black Markets disappeared after a few years, that is when Japan's distribution system improved, but they had made a significant impact upon the urban business developments. In fact, the black market became a route for large-scale social movement, and played a vital role in forming a self-employed group responsible for post-war urban commerce" (Hashimoto 2013: 14). In addition, the air raids burned out

almost all the city shops. The burnt ruins were left behind by workers who had lost their jobs, bereaved families who had lost their means of support, and veterans who also had no jobs. All these and those involved in reconstruction flowed into the area. They gained a living by selling their household goods to stalls or set up their own stalls (Ibid.).

The burned city gave birth to post-war urban commerce. The percentage of self-employed persons whose father is not self-employed has risen significantly. “The war disaster has made it impossible to inherit the family business, and before the war began 40% of those who inherited the father’s self-employed business. However, this decreased to 25% from 1949 and thereafter” (Hashimoto 2009: 93-94). On the other hand, the opportunity in new initiatives were increasing. “The black market changed the spatial structure of the city, because it has started a new commercial area and amusement sector that were begun from them” (Hashimoto 2013: 14). It can even be said that these markets created the vitality of the city. Based in the wealth generated by these markets, several areas have become commercial centers and have developed as prominent locations. Ikebukuro was one of such symbolic areas benefiting from its location.

Another Significant Research Project

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the College of Sociology, faculty staff had begun work on several research projects (Ushikubo and Okuda 1985: 4-5). Consider at this point another outstanding research project conducted by the late Professor Emeritus Michihiro Okuda. He had decided to conduct a local community survey in the Ikebukuro district. This research commenced as fieldwork in the vicinity of the Hinode-cho in 1983. In 1984, a report “From work in the field of Hinode-cho: The town in a primeval space” [Hinode-cho no firudowaku kara — sakariba kukan no nakano machi], was published of major research conducted by Professor Okuda's seminar-class students.

The shopping street in Hinode-cho in the Ikebukuro area has many shop owners who developed businesses from the black market. This would have later effects upon the concentration of newcomers from foreign lands. What I mean is that when foreign people came from abroad, those involved in black market were not so concerned with the newly arrived foreigners, since they were not interested in their heterogeneity or even their resources. The name of Hinode-cho no longer exists because of local land readjustments, and in the 1960s, the Hinode-cho district became known as Higashi-ikebukuro and Minami-ikebukuro. Okuda called Hinode-cho or old Hinode-cho that retains its archaic character from long ago. The atmosphere of the areas investigated by Okuda has been characterized by its notorious vulgarity since it was developed from the “Tokyo Detention Center.” “The

‘New City Development Center’ was established in 1966, and the ‘Sunshine City’ including the high-rise building ‘Sunshine 60’ with 60 floors above ground and 4 floors below ground was completed in 1978. Sunshine 60 was the tallest building in Asia at the time (251m above sea level)” (Mitsui Sumitomo torasuto fudosan [Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdings, Inc.] 2020). Afterwards, the Sunshine 60 has become a land mark of that period and the area. But, this district was originally a very poor area with many wooden dilapidated rental apartments. Okuda and his students continued to investigate the area, and found that in the area the population from overseas had gradually increased from the mid-1980s.

Manifestation of Ethnic Communities in the ‘Vulgar Fringeland’

The eastern part of Ikebukuro, before the war, could be characterized as a vulgar fringeland with narrow paved streets as well as being the location of the Tokyo prison. As previously mentioned, immediately after the war, this part of the city was revived by the black markets, and thus, to a large extent, the image of vulgarity still remained.

In the periods of high economic growth since the late 1950s, some inner areas of Tokyo have attracted a considerable number of dwellers from the provinces, such as students and impoverished single workers. In addition, these areas have convenient railway stations nearby, and offer sufficiently low priced, if poor quality, accommodation. After the oil crisis of 1973-1974, Japan experienced stable economic growth, and so domestic *en masse* mobility slowed or halted. Following suburban developments, these newcomers from all over Japan then moved away to the *outskirts* of Tokyo when they formed households. So, with the increased suburbanization, various inner areas in Tokyo encountered problems associated with inner city decay and an aging population.

However, in the 1980s, a new ‘pipeline’ of human movement has appeared from neighboring Asian countries (Okuda and Tajima 1991). In fact, since the late-1980s, the presence of foreigners has become quite visible and a welcomed aspect of inner-city life in several cities. The attraction of these inner areas for newcomers from foreign lands lies in the development of businesses which offer numerous jobs in service industries. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, advanced shopping facilities and low-priced accommodation opportunities are also located in these areas. Additionally, the increasing numbers of foreign residents are drawn to these areas by the convenient location of commercial and other facilities. The Ikebukuro district has functioned in this way for single dwellers since the end of the Second World War, as it has provided a rich variety of shops, taverns, public bathhouses, coin-laundries, small restaurants, and the like.

The Development of Ethnicity Studies in Japan's Sociology

Professor Okuda's extensive research into Asian newcomers in the late 1980s was, in fact, pioneering empirical research into how Japan was dealing with its immediate ethnicity issues. The research project drew attention to the actual living conditions of the "newcomers," by presenting the voice of the inarticulate Asian foreigners alongside the views of the host population. In the late-1980s a dramatic change occurred to the way ethnicity and related matters were viewed in Japan due to a significant increase in the arrival of foreigners. This encouraged the emergence of sustained migration and ethnicity studies, and such researches have flourished ever since (Mizukami 2018).

Toshima ward of Tokyo, where Rikkyo University is located, is one of the well-known ethnic towns and the foreign population occupies almost 10 per cent, of which half (nearly 5%) are of Chinese ethnic background. In recent statistics, Vietnamese population has dramatically grown. The increase in the foreign population is related to an expansion in the work-age population in inner-city Tokyo where there have been many older citizens. "Additionally, ethnic businesses have been flourishing with the appearance of Asian restaurants, groceries, the video rental and book shops. Several free community papers, which give information and news about life in Japan, are provided in these shops" (Mizukami 2009). However, the recent trends show that web-site information has much more important for the newly arrived Chinese. In the contemporary situation, it is obvious that some are not merely migrant workers, they are also 'community residents' which term more accurately captures the status of many whose lives have become rooted in Japanese society, but recent sociological researches have revealed that there are some transnational migrants who live in Japan while at the same time keeping strong bonds with their country of origin.

Ongoing Projects

These gradual changes were also having an impact upon the receiving community. Nearly three decades has passed since the massive arrival of newcomers began and the heated debate over whether Japan should continue to be a closed country or whether it is already becoming, or has already become, open to new ethnicities. The development of the local Ikebukuro survey for the 25th anniversary of the College of Sociology resulted in a rich inheritance from the pioneering investigations of the Black Market and the study of the area's ethnic community. About 10 years later, the results of the survey were published and the fruitfulness of the research was maintained. In 2018 the College of Sociology celebrated its 60th anniversary and we were not planning any particular new research project for that

occasion. But we have produced much by way of collaboration, including a continued annual conference of three countries, China, Korea, and Japan. In addition, the College of Sociology of Rikkyo University eventually established its own Sociological Association. It is 60th anniversary of the establishment of the College, and the Rikkyo Sociological Association's first Conference on 30th March 2019 was one of the major events. There were several paper-presenters from overseas, including Professor Eric Fong, from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Badaruddin Mohamed, from University Sains Malaysia. and Professor Lih Yun Lin, from National Taiwan University. We do hope that these will bear fruit in all kinds of ways in the future.

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